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March 22, 2010

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# SUPERINTENDENT LUNA OPPOSES PAY INCREASES FOR CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS

BOISE – Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna testified today before the House State Affairs Committee in opposition to legislation that would increase salaries for Idaho’s constitutional officers.

In his testimony, Superintendent Luna asked the Legislature to give all constitutional officers, including himself, the ability to reject pay increases, a provision not in the current legislation.

“I would ask that you consider giving constitutional officers the same ability you have, which is to reject increases to your compensation when they come before this body,” Superintendent Luna told legislators this morning.

Under House Bill 692, the salaries for constitutional officers will be reduced by 4 percent next year and then restored to current funding levels in 2012. For 2013 and 2014, all constitutional officers’ pay will then increased and set based on a percentage of the Governor’s salary. While Superintendent Luna supports the reductions in pay next year, he remains concerned about the pay increases in future years and the exclusion of any provision that would give constitutional officers the right to reject future pay increases, especially in tough economic times.

For two years in a row, Superintendent Luna has stood before the Legislature and asked them to address this issue.

“Constitutional officers continue to receive pay increases even in this tough economic time, and it is not right. This must change,” Superintendent Luna told members of the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee in January. “My employees and other state employees are taking furlough days, while the state is forcing its constitutional officers to take pay raises. We should not be taking this additional money from taxpayers at a time when Idahoans are losing their jobs and taking pay cuts.”

Under the current system, the Superintendent’s annual salary is set by the Legislature and according to an Attorney General’s opinion published last year, it is illegal for any constitutional officer to refuse an increase in pay. The opinion states that even in tight budget years – while all other programs and salaries are being cut – no constitutional officer can refuse a raise or take a decrease in pay.

Superintendent Luna has donated the increases in his salary to charitable organizations for the past two years but said that still is not fair to Idaho taxpayers. “We are still taking money from taxpayers to fund increases and then turn around and donate that money to a charity of our choice. I would rather that money remain with the taxpayer,” he said.

House Bill 692 was sent to the amending order in the full House.

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